

Okuyucu Mektupları / *Reader Letters*

Documentation Services for Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) Members

Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (TBMM) Dokümantasyon Hizmetleri

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Abstract

The study gives information on the documentation services (newspaper database, minutes database, and periodicals database) which have been developed in the Library and Archive Services Department of the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA). Because of the need among members of parliament (MPs) for analyzed information the databases have been planned and developed in the library. The main intention in creating the databases is supporting MPs' legislative studies. The databases include a cumulative subject headings list that called "thesaurus" which makes it possible to search for information in the three databases with the same keywords.

Keywords: TGNA; Library and Archive Services Department of the Turkish Grand National Assembly; documentation services.

Öz

Bu çalışmada TBMM Kütüphane ve Arşiv Hizmetleri Başkanlığı'nın vermiş olduğu dokümantasyon hizmetlerinden (gazete, tutanak ve dergi veri tabanları) bahsedilecektir. Milletvekillerinin analiz edilmiş bilgi ihtiyacını karşılamak üzere geliştirilen bu veri tabanları yasama çalışmalarına destek olma amacını gütmektedir. Veri tabanları thesaurus adı verilen konu başlıkları listesini içermekte ve her bir veri tabanında aynı anahtar sözcüklerle tarama yapılabilmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: TBMM; TBMM Kütüphane ve Arşiv Hizmetleri Başkanlığı; dokümantasyon hizmetleri.

A Brief History of TGNA and the Library

The history of the Turkish Parliament dates back to 1876. The first Ottoman parliament (*Meclis-i Umumi*) was opened with a speech delivered by Sultan Abdülhamit II on March 19, 1877. According to the Constitution, the parliament was bicameral. The lower chamber was called *Meclis-i Mebusan*, and the upper chamber (senate), *Meclis-i Ayan*. Another parliamentary period began with the second constitutional era in 1908. However, it was the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) which founded the Turkish Republic and was inaugurated in 1920. While the two previous parliaments were seated in Istanbul, which was then the capital of the country, the TGNA was convened in Ankara.

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A one-party administration prevailed between 1920 to 1946, with the multi-party era beginning in 1946. Although the parliament was bicameral systems in the past, the Turkish Parliament became unicameral in 1980. Today it has 550 elected members.

To meet information requirements, the parliaments of Turkey have always had a library, supervised by a library committee. Since, unfortunately, the first two Parliament Houses were burnt in fires along with all documents within, our information about them is rather scarce. The only source of information regarding the library records and services of those parliaments is the Rules of Procedure of both houses. On the shelves of the present Parliamentary Library there about 3000 volumes inherited from the early parliaments. However, it is not known how they arrived in the collection. When the TGNA opened in 1920, the need for information was immediately felt. Only five months after the establishment of the TGNA, a proposal was accepted at the 74th meeting of the Assembly on 28th September 1920 to found the Turkish Grand National Assembly Library officially. The main function of the Library and Archive Services of the TGNA is to support the legislative activities of MPs in auditing the government and in representation and duties related to their constituencies by providing every sort of information and documentation.

Documentation Services

The history of the TGNA's documentation services dates back to 1983. Documentation services started as a project called PARENSIS Parliamentary Information system. Prior to this, documentation services in the library were developed in printed formats like DOKBAN, TUTBAN, MİLBAN, and so on:

- **MİLBAN (Biographical Database):** Finding biographical information regarding MPs has always been a problem. In order to answer such questions, It was generated a special data bank which has been in use from 1983 onwards. The main scope of the project is to cover the whole parliamentary period since 1920 (Çelik, 1994).
- **DOKBAN (Newspaper Clippings Databank):** This databank includes clippings related to pre-defined subjects from selected Turkish newspapers. Storage is in optical media, and indexing is manual. One problem encountered in this project is the print quality of the clippings. Thus, when the clippings are scanned, optical character recognition (OCR) or intelligent character recognition (ICR) cannot be used. The only solution is to use image storage techniques and to index the clippings manually (Çelik, 1994).
- **TUTBAN (Parliamentary Papers Databank):** TGNA began using computer technology for indexing purposes in 1987. The first step was to build an infrastructure for the project, that is, to create a thesaurus and analyze the source itself. The system includes indexed print versions of newspapers and legislation. With the development of information technology and the Internet, documentation services has established electronic databases that make it possible for MPs to find information in a short time (Çelik, 1994).

These three databases are currently in service for MPs' legislative research in the TGNA Library. The reason for establishing these units was MPs' need for analyzed information. Searching for information in printed newspapers, journals, and minutes in the early 1990s was time-consuming and required a great deal of human effort; meanwhile MPs required this information in a short time. The Project started at the beginning of 1983 and the analyzed information begins with this date as well.

A dramatic problem was the lack of terms or subject headings lists to be used when indexing the documents to be included in the databases. In order to fill the gap, a subject heading list preparation project was completed in 1983. A Thesaurus was generated by TGNA librarians. It was based on The LC Subject Headings List and the EUROVOC Thesaurus. Thesaurus is updated from period to period. Subject headings increase according to specific events (such as

violence in sports). This has been a professional study which still continues and is in use for indexing the three databases in the library.

Newspapers Documentation Database

First, it should be emphasized that the database has been locally planned and developed as a result of the cooperation of librarians and computer engineers in the computer services unit. The database was established in order to keep MPs informed concerning the country's agenda and to support legislative activities. According to these objectives, news, interviews, articles and other types of information have been indexed and included in full-text. The database covers information from 1997 to the present. The database included five nationwide newspapers from 1991 to 1997. Nowadays, all 35 daily Turkish nationwide newspapers are indexed in the database with full-text news, articles, and interviews. Selected news, articles and interviews cover primarily parliamentary and legislative studies. As well, It has been indexed news about on the country's agenda such as economics, international relations and politics.

The Newspapers Database makes it easier for librarians and users to search and retrieve information in a limited time. For example, when a user wants to search "Turkey-Singapore diplomacy" in the Turkish press from the 1990s to the present, it takes only minutes to retrieve all information related to the research question. The Newspapers Documentation Services still continues as a unit in the library. The database includes more than 1,124,532 newspaper item,s to which 250 are added daily. Searches can be made using options such as author name, subject, newspaper name, genre of writing, and date interval.

(Figure 1): Newspaper Documentation Database

There are eight full-time staff, two of whom work as librarians indexing and selecting information to be added to the database, while the other six find information on the web and copy-paste this into the database.

Minutes Documentation Database

The Minutes Documentation Database include information from 1983 to the present. The project's indexing system was implemented in such a way that it would be able to answer all kinds of questions related to MPs' parliamentary activities.

The Minutes Documentation unit works on indexing and analyzing the Journal of Minutes. The database which emerges as a result of this process aims to meet the requests of readers accurately and on time. All minutes such as debates, bills, oral and written questions, and reports of the basic committees are indexed in the database. The Minutes database has been formed in order to provide fast and proper access to the minutes information required by MPs. Furthermore, retrospective work has also been carried out.

Minutes are an important information sources for MPs and researchers. Because MPs and researchers sometimes need to analyze former debates in the course of their legislative research or academic studies. The Minutes database helps like this researchs. The database includes more than 97.064 minutes documentation. The minutes database as well as It is available all minutes over the internet from 1908 to the present as fulltext "pdf" format.

The screenshot displays the 'Tutanak Bilgi Bankası Sorgu Ekranı' (Minutes Information Bank Search Screen) within a Windows application window titled 'Oracle Developer Formlar Çalıştırma Zamanı - [WINDOWS]'. The interface is divided into several sections for search criteria:

- Top Section:** Includes fields for 'Başlangıç Tarihi' (Start Date), 'Bitiş Tarihi' (End Date), 'Yasama Organı' (Legislative Body), 'Dönemi' (Period), 'Yıl' (Year), 'Partisi' (Party), 'Unvanı' (Title), 'Seçim Çevresi' (Constituency), and 'Taksim Esas No' (Distribution Basis No).
- Filter Sections:** Multiple sections labeled 'VE' (AND) with dropdown menus for 'Türü' (Type), 'Tür Detayı' (Type Detail), 'Konusu' (Topic), and 'Konuşmacı' (Speaker). Each section has a 'Ust Konu' (Parent Topic) and 'Alt Konu' (Sub Topic) dropdown, and a 'Konuşmacı' (Speaker) dropdown.
- Search Action:** A 'Sorgu Başlat' (Start Search) button is located at the bottom right of the main form.
- Search Results Window:** A smaller window titled 'Korullar' (Queries) is open, showing a search for 'Singapur'. It lists 'Konu adı' (Topic Name) as 'Singapur - Türkiye Bilgileri' and 'Bul' (Find) button.
- Bottom Bar:** A status bar at the bottom shows 'Listede seçenekler: 2' (Options in list: 2), 'Kayıt: 1/1' (Record: 1/1), and a taskbar with various application icons.

(Figure 2): Minutes Documentation Database

Periodicals Documentation Database

The Periodicals documentation unit was established in order to facilitate the legislative activities of MPs and thus achieve an updated and rapid flow of information. Articles are selected from periodicals on international affairs, law, politics, economy, population, statistics, public administration, and other subjects. The selected articles are indexed and added to the database to make information available for the use of MPs and other researchers. The database covers information from 1997 to the present. There are 388 journals indexed in the database. The database is somewhat different from familiar ones. First, the journals and magazines included in the database are selected with academic and objective criteria on specific subjects like legislation, politics, law, economy, and so on. The database includes more than 274,633 items.

(Figure 3): Periodicals Database

This database is very useful for MPs and other users when they require information on a very specific subject, event, period, or person.

All the databases have been created to support MPs' legislative research. The databases include a cumulative subject headings list that makes it possible to search for information in all three databases with same keywords. The list is organized for acquiring analyzed information in specific formats and in accordance with the information-seeking behavior of MPs. When MPs require a search on specific topics (for example, economics, politics, international relations, etc.), these databases provide information with nearly 20,000 subject titles.

Conclusion

Nowadays it is difficult to provide information sources as well as to organize them and put them into service effectively because of the demand for quick and efficient service by MPs in parliamentary libraries. Undoubtedly, the content analysis of newspapers, periodicals, and the parliamentary Journal of Minutes provided by library database services makes it easier for

librarians and users to find information in a timely manner. In the future, moving the databases onto the web with a unique interface will increase efficiency and make their use even easier.

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